

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING DAMS ON THE
COLUMBIA AND SNAKE RIVER SYSTEM

DECEMBER 14, 2000.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, from the Committee on Resources,
submitted the following

REPORT

together with

ADDITIONAL AND DISSENTING VIEWS

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 63]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 63) expressing the sense of the Congress opposing removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the concurrent resolution be agreed to.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of House Concurrent Resolution 63 is to express the sense of the Congress in opposing removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

At the time this Resolution was introduced, as part of the ongoing efforts to recover runs of endangered salmon and steelhead trout, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was studying the feasibility of removing a number of federal dams on the lower Snake River to enhance fish runs. These dams include the Ice Harbor Dam, the Lower Monument Dam, the Little Goose Dam and the Lower Granite Dam. The study was to consider several courses of action, including breaching the dams or extreme draw down of the operating pools behind them.

House Concurrent Resolution 63 notes that hydropower from dams on the Columbia and Snake River system provide 75 percent of the electricity available in the northwestern United States. Flood control benefits provided by these dams in 1996 and 1997 are estimated to be \$4.6 billion. Barge transportation on the Columbia and Snake River system transports 43 percent of all U.S. wheat exports in 1997 and saved \$38 million per year over land-based operations. Over half the irrigated farmland in Oregon, Washington and Idaho are irrigated with River system water. Recent studies by the National Marine Fisheries Service indicate that survival rates of salmon and steelhead migrating down the system have remained the same or increased since 1961, even as four dams were added to the Snake River. A federal interagency group concluded that removing four dams on the lower Snake River could not guarantee meeting fish restoration targets. Improved fish hatchery processes have resulted in the first successful run of coho salmon on the Yakima River in three decades.

House Concurrent Resolution 63 will express the sense of Congress in opposing removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes. The Resolution indicates that: (1) the dams on the Columbia and Snake River system provide tremendous economic and environmental benefits to the United States that should be retained; (2) plans for the recovery of federally-protected fish species in the Columbia and Snake River system should not rely on dam removal schemes; (3) efforts to maintain healthy and sustainable populations of resident and anadromous fish in the Columbia and Snake Rivers must address all the factors impacting species population and health, including ocean conditions, harvest levels, predation, and passage around and through hydroelectric projects; and (4) any comprehensive fish recovery plan for the Columbia and Snake River system must be based on sound data and consider the economic and social costs associated with changes to the management and use of the River system infrastructure.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Congressman Doc Hastings introduced House Concurrent Resolution 63 on March 18, 1999. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Resources and additionally to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Within the Committee on Resources, the resolution was referred to the Subcommittee on Water and Power and the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. The two Subcommittees held a joint hearing on the resolution on May 27, 1999. On July 21, 1999, the Resources Committee met to consider the resolution. The Subcommittees were discharged from further consideration of the measure by unanimous consent. No amendments were offered and the resolution was ordered reported to the House of Representatives by voice vote.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this resolution.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII

1. *Cost of Legislation.* Clause 3(d)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out this resolution. However, clause 3(d)(3)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

2. *Congressional Budget Act.* As required by clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this resolution does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

3. *Government Reform Oversight Findings.* Under clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee has received no report of oversight findings and recommendations from the Committee on Government Reform on this resolution.

4. *Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate.* Under clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for this resolution from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, July 26, 1999.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has reviewed H. Con. Res. 63, expressing the sense of the Congress opposing the removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes, as ordered reported by the Committee on Resources on July 21, 1999. CBO estimates that approval of this resolution would have no impact on the federal budget. Because the resolution would not affect direct spending or receipts, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Deborah Reis.

Sincerely,

BARRY A. ANDERSON
(For Dan L. Crippen, Director).

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

This resolution contains no unfunded mandates.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

This resolution is not intended to preempt any State, local or tribal law.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

If passed, this resolution would make no changes in existing law.

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

H. Con. Res. 63 would have the Congress conclude—prior to receiving all the facts and without regard to science—that removal of four dams on the lower Snake River should not even be considered as an option to aid salmon recovery. There is no question that dams in the Columbia River region provide economic benefits, and it is my view that any fish recovery plan should be based on sound data and thoroughly consider economic and social costs associated with changes to river management and infrastructure. However, because this resolution seeks to eliminate dam removal from consideration before scientific and economic evaluations are complete, I oppose it. Instead, the more responsible approach is to encourage the Administration to analyze all options with equal rigor so that federal, state, local, tribal, and other stakeholders have access to the very best information when making difficult decisions.

H. Con. Res. 63—while superficially reassuring to economic interests vested in the status quo—is counterproductive and would assure only that selective facts and science are used during the difficult process of determining how best to improve the conditions for salmon in the Pacific Northwest. This type of approach is fundamentally flawed and should be rejected by the House.

PETER DEFazio.

DISSENTING VIEWS

H. Con. Res. 63 would have the Congress conclude—prior to receiving all the facts and without regard to science—that removal of four dams on the lower Snake River should not even be considered as an option to aid salmon recovery. There is no question that dams in the Columbia River region provide economic benefits, and it is our view that any fish recovery plan should be based on sound data and thoroughly consider economic and social costs associated with changes to river management and infrastructure. However, because this resolution seeks to eliminate dam removal from consideration before scientific and economic evaluations are complete, we strongly oppose it. Instead, the more responsible approach is to encourage the Administration to analyze all options with equal rigor so that federal, state, local, tribal, and other stakeholders have access to the very best information when making difficult decisions.

The Columbia River system once contained the largest chinook salmon population in the world. The Snake River, the largest tributary of the Columbia River, provides a vital migration route for salmon traveling between the Pacific Ocean and rivers in central Idaho to complete their life cycle. These fish require riverine habitat for spawning, ocean habitat for growth to sexual maturity, and the means to travel in between the two. Snake River salmon populations have experienced such dramatic declines that every one (sockeye, spring/summer chinook, fall chinook, and steelhead) is listed under the Endangered Species Act. Coho have been declared extinct. Although the resolution states that survival rates of salmon and steelhead migrating down the Columbia and Snake River system have stayed the same or increased since 1961, the critical variable—numbers of adult fish that return to reproduce—has declined to a level far below what is required even to maintain the depleted populations.

Plummeting salmon numbers in the Columbia River region have been attributed by scientists to several causes: dams that impede migration, loss or degradation of habitat (including losses due to reservoirs of still, warm water associated with dams), predation, fishing, and climatic conditions. In addition to supplementing natural populations with hatchery-reared fish, other methods such as fish ladders, spillage of juveniles over dams, and trucking/barging of juveniles currently are used to try to maintain viable salmon populations. These efforts, however, have failed miserably.

The Administration is in the process of analyzing alternatives available to facilitate recovery of endangered and threatened salmon populations along the Snake River in Washington. A decision that reflects analysis consequences and salmon recovery benefits is due in late 1999. One option under consideration involves breaching four dams on the lower Snake River (Ice Harbor, Lower Monu-

mental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite Dams); these are 4 of the 29 federal dams in the Pacific Northwest. It is important to recognize that some of the assertions made in H. Con. Res. 63 address dams throughout the entire Columbia River basin rather than the four dams being considered for breaching. These four dams produce approximately 5% of the total electricity in the Pacific Northwest, provide no flood control, and irrigate a minute fraction of the farmland in the region. And while the dams effectively subsidize barge transportation, other modes of commercial transport are placed at a disadvantage.

Underlying H. Con. Res. 63 is the “slippery slope” fear that the entire Pacific Northwest hydropower system could be at risk. But among a number of alternatives, the Administration is only evaluating the removal of four dams on the Snake River, and neither the final recommendation nor the scientific or economic analyses have yet been completed. Moreover, the Administration has not yet released the documents—a draft biological opinion on operation of the Columbia/Snake federal dams; a draft recovery plan for Snake River salmon; and an environmental impact statement on future management of the lower Snake River dams—upon which it will base its December 1999 decision. Although the Administration has not submitted a formal position on this resolution, the U.S. Army Corps testified on May 27, 1999, before the Subcommittees on Power and Water and Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans, that current studies of all options should be allowed to be completed before deciding on the best course of action regarding the Snake River dams.

If restoring salmon populations were the only goal, the vast majority of independent scientists agree that the best available recovery plan would include removal of the four lower Snake River dams. However, removing four dams in the lower Snake River will also have an economic impact on the region, affecting some stakeholders more than others. These impacts should be and are being considered during the decisionmaking process. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are also substantial costs to maintaining the current system, including the demise of recreational and commercial fishing industries, potential lawsuits by Canada and the Tribes for broken treaty agreements, and increased expenses related to fish restoration practices. For example, estimates of current expenditures related to salmon recovery in the region—expenditures which are currently failing to produce needed results—are on the order of \$1 billion per year.

H. Con. Res. 63—while superficially reassuring to economic interests vested in the status quo—is counterproductive and would assure only that selective facts and science are used during the difficult process of determining how best to improve the conditions for salmon in the Pacific Northwest. This type of approach is fundamentally flawed and should be rejected by the House.

GEORGE MILLER.
GRACE NAPOLITANO.
BRUCE VENTO.
MARK UDALL.
NEIL ABERCROMBIE.
RUSH HOLT.

